

IN THE CLAIMS

Please enter the following claims:

1-13 (cancelled)

14. (currently amended) A method of supplementing a cleaning and sterilizing process for a soiled item having bio-contaminants, comprising the steps of:

~~a. pre-rinsing said soiled item with ozone to loosen the soil,~~

~~b. applying a cleaning agent to the soiled item,~~

~~c. cleaning said soiled item until a clean item is produced,~~

[[d]] a. applying a chemical sterilizing agent to said ~~a~~ clean item to achieve high-level disinfection,

~~e. rinsing the high-level disinfected item with water, and~~

[[f.]] b. providing a final rinse of ~~rinsing~~ the high-level disinfected item with ~~ozone~~ ozonated, filtered water stored in a tank to substantially degrade any remaining chemical residue and biomatter resulting from contamination of said water on or in said disinfected item.

15. (original) The method of claim 14, wherein said soiled item comprises an endoscope.

16-17 (cancelled)

18. (original) The method of claim 14, wherein said soil comprises biofilm.

19. (cancelled)

20. (previously presented) The method of claim 14, wherein said chemical sterilizing agents are selected from the group consisting of glutaraldehyde, peracetic acid, and ethylene oxide.

21-26 (cancelled)

27. (currently amended) A method of preventing cross-contamination of components within a sterilizing apparatus, comprising:

- a. high-level disinfecting an item placed within said sterilizing apparatus according to a predetermined method; and
- b. flushing said apparatus components, including a chamber, a filter, a tray, and a fill line, with ~~ozone~~ ozonated water after the completion of step a.

28-29 (cancelled)